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Congress Must Use Authority

ADD THE NAME of Rep. John V. Lindsay, R-N.Y., to the growing numbers of congressmen who believe much stiffer controls are required to supervise the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In the March Esquire Lindsay presents his case, and briefly, its essence is this:

CIA often acts as both player and umpire, witness and judge, in the field of intelligence, and "being not merely central but DOMINANT (Lindsay's emphasis) in the intelligence community, is in an extraordinary position, so long as it is left unchecked to carry its special institutional tendencies into the shaping of American foreign policy."

Formulation of American foreign policy under the Constitution is the responsibility of the executive, subject to the acquiescence of the Congress. Both executive — in the persons of the president and vice president — and Congress are ultimately answerable to the electorate. The CIA never is.

The CIA is merely an appointed agency of the executive, established

to serve the national interest in certain areas. That perforce it functions in secret doesn't entitle the agency to make policy.

Neither does the necessity for the CIA to operate in secret mean that

the Congress shouldn't regularly supervise the agency. The State Department, for example, frequently must mask its intentions from the public, yet no government agency receives more congressional attention into its affairs.

The CIA has become a virtual law unto itself. This is largely the fault of Congress, in that the surveillance now exercised is spotty and seldom.

Lindsay, taking his cue from a long standing proposal, points out how adequate controls can be applied: the creation of a joint committee on foreign intelligence, whose assignment would be to monitor all intelligence activities.

And for those worried that such a committee would impair the secrecy of the nation's intelligence system Lindsay has the correct answer: "... in the fields of atomic energy weapons development, and, in some respects, foreign policy," the Congress exercises its authority, and none of the federal agencies involved has suffered as a consequence.

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Threat of unnecessary secrecy

By Rep. John V. Lindsay (R., N.Y.)

From an article in the current issue of Esquire.

NEW CAN DENY the actual and potential power of the CIA, however carefully it may be held in check by the skillful men who run it. Ours is supposed to be a government of laws, not of men. At stake are questions of war and peace, as the two Cuban crises so clearly demonstrated. All of us at that time took a look into the atomic pit. Decisions can be made at such times and actions taken about which the public is totally in the dark. So be it. As much as we may abhor government by secrecy, as much as it threatens fundamental liberties, we must understand its limited and necessary application in particular circumstances of hot or cold war. Nevertheless, crucial decisions are made for us and in our name of which we know nothing. And all too often secrecy which is necessary breeds secrecy which is unnecessary, at which point the danger becomes nothing less than a threat to democratic institutions, a marginal one at the outset, but potentially a most serious one.

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